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BLESSED BE THE TIE THAT UNBINDS: CONSTITUENCY PRESSURES
AND NATIONAL PARTY FORCES IN GREAT BRITAIN

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the relationship between constituency service and party ties at the local and national levels. The data come from two surveys: one of the British electorate in May 1979 and the other of Members and their agents in those constituencies sampled in the voter study. Pressures at the local party level, it is argued, reinforce the electoral incentive for Members to perform constituency services diligently. Members widely believe that constituency work improves relations with activists and bolsters local party morale. For their part, core constituents -- activists and strong party identifiers -- value constituency work very highly and are more likely than other groups in the electorate to make use of the Member's services.

The effect of constituency effort at the local level is to weaken party ties at the national level. Ivor Crewe noted that Labour fought very well in its marginal seats in 1979, and this study argues that this was because Labour MPs in marginal seats worked hard to establish a local identity. MPs in marginal seats tend to have more favourable voter ratings than do those in safer seats. Moreover, MPs who were active in their constituencies had better swings in 1979 than MPs who were inactive. For Labour Members, constituency work "cushioned" the swing, and for Conservative Members, it "amplified" the swing. The paper concludes with some speculation about why nonpolicy pressures might increase at the local level.

BLESSED BE THE TIE THAT UNBINDS: CONSTITUENCY PRESSURES
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There are recent signs that the ties between British Members of Parliament and their local parties may be changing in important ways. The conventional wisdom has been that activists do not much affect the behavior of Members [Finer et. al., 1961; Frasure, 1971], and in so far as they do, they tend to enforce a closer adherence between the policy positions of individual Members and party leaders [Epstein, 1964]. It now appears that certain militant activists in the Labour party are pressuring their MPs to dissent from the party leadership's moderate policies, and many believe that the intent behind automatic reselection — a rule adopted at the 1979 Labour Conference requiring that Members submit themselves for readoption at each election — is to make Labour Members even more vulnerable to such pressures in the future. Leaving formal procedures aside, all sitting M.P.s will soon face what amounts to reselection due to extensive changes in constituency boundaries.

Ties between Members and the national parties may also be changing in significant ways. The General Election of May 1979 exhibited unusual regional deviations which were not at all typical of the post war pattern of a uniform national swing: Mrs. Thatcher's mandate was considerably weaker in Scotland, the North of England and Wales than it was in the South and London [Crewe, 1979]. At the same time Phillip Norton's work demonstrates that Members have become more

rebellious since 1970 and that it has become harder for the whips to maintain party cohesion in Parliament [Norton, 1980; Crowe, 1980].

For the most part, the focus of analysis and speculation has been on the policy implications of these changes: for instance, will reselection and the growth of local party pressures make Labour Members more responsive to the policy preferences of party activists and less responsive to the policy preferences of the general electorate, or, to use another example, will the breakdown of party discipline make a government — even one with as large a majority as Mrs. Thatcher's — more vulnerable to defeat in Parliament and less able to implement its policies? These are questions of fundamental importance, but they should not cause us to overlook various nonpolicy considerations. A significant amount of the Member's time is devoted to looking after the interests of constituents and constituencies [Dowse, 1963; King, 1974; Richards, 1972]. There is some evidence that this aspect of the Member's job has grown in importance since the war: caseloads have increased, Members are being encouraged to take a greater interest in local issues by their constituency parties, and some Members, in marginal seats especially, have felt it necessary to adopt a demanding "grassrooting" approach to their constituency work [Barker and Rush, 1967; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1980].

The central question this paper will address is how does constituency work relate to local and national party ties? What kinds of expectations do activists and loyalists at the local level have about their Member's constituency obligations and will these expectations manifest themselves if Labour proceeds with automatic

reselection? Secondly, at the national level, does the conscientious pursuit of constituency work contribute in any way to a weakening of the electoral link between Members and their national parties? Specifically, does the strategy of diligent constituency work create a buffer against adverse national electoral tides, and if it does, what implications does this have for national party ties?

LOCAL PARTY EXPECTATIONS AND CONSTITUENCY WORK

Shortly after the conclusion of the 1979 Labour party Conference, I asked a Labour M.P. what effect he thought reselection might have on his behavior. His response was that he probably would have to spend more time courting the favor of local party members and attending constituency party meetings. A reform like reselection would undoubtedly make relations between party members and M.P.s more crucial, but how this would affect the behavior of Members is complex. This is partly because projections about how Members and their parties would react under such a rule rest on certain counterfactual assumptions. One tends to assume, for example, that the composition of constituency Labour parties would not change if this rule were implemented. Hence, given evidence that certain constituency Labour parties are now controlled by small groups of left wing activists, some have argued that reselection would give these groups greater leverage over the policy views of their M.P.s and would thereby contribute to a significant leftward drift in the Labour party (The Times, June 17, 1980, p. 15). However, changing the rules about adoption could stimulate a greater interest in constituency Labour

politics and attract back into the party individuals with less militant leanings. If this were to happen, the prediction of a leftward drift might not be fulfilled. In the same way, any predictions about the nonpolicy implications of reselection will rest on crucial counterfactual assumptions.

The first question to ask is whether activist preferences matter when it comes to the M.P.'s constituency work and if so, why? One way activists express their preferences about constituency work to the Member is through questions and discussions during the adoption process [Ranney, 1965; Rush, 1969]. Frequently, prospective candidates are asked to demonstrate their interest in constituency affairs. A specific manifestation of this is the tendency of local parties to ask that their Members take up residency in the constituency. Evidence on this point comes from a survey of Members and agents conducted in the summer of 1979.¹ Excluding agents from our sample of interviews, the analysis which follows is based on the responses of 93 M.P.s (including the newly elected, the defeated, retirees and sitting Members in a sample of constituencies drawn from our voter survey) to questions about their constituency work. When asked whether they approved of the practice of asking Members to live in the constituency, approximately a third either had no opinion or refused to answer, but of those who did, about half (i.e. 32) said that they approved of this demand and slightly less than half did not approve or had substantial reservations. As for reasons why Members thought that residing in the constituency was a good idea, the most frequent response — especially among young Conservatives — was that

it demonstrated accessibility and helped Members keep in touch with their constituents. Others said that it gave the Member a better sense of belonging to the constituency (10 percent), that it promoted good relations with activists (2 percent), that it enabled them to ward off local challenges to the seat (2 percent) and just generally that it helped with the job (6 percent). Those who disapproved of this practice also mentioned a variety of reasons. Chief among them was that living in the constituency was either too demanding on the Member's time or on that of the Member's family (9 percent), and that it made it hard for the Members to stay above divisions in local interests and be objective (8 percent). Many have complied with their adoption promises. Approximately 43 percent of those sampled lived in the constituency, another 4 percent had some sort of apartment or cottage there, 17 percent lived near the constituency, and 21 percent did not live in or near the constituency.

One way, therefore, in which the local party shapes the constituency work of the Member is through adoption demands such as asking the prospective candidate whether he or she will reside in the constituency. Another inducement is the expectation of party related benefits associated with constituency work. An overwhelming majority of those interviewed in both parties (i.e. 82 percent) felt that doing constituency work served to bolster the morale and strength of the local party organization in several ways. The most widely perceived benefit was that it improved relations with party activists (53 percent), making them work harder for the Member at election time and increasing their involvement. Turning up at branch meetings and

various social events was particularly important in this regard. Some (4 percent) also expressed the hope that this work might soften policy disagreements with activists by building up a measure of personal credit with the local party members.

There are then two incentives which link local party expectations to constituency work. The first centers on adoption and the promises which are made at that time. Automatic reselection would clearly strengthen this incentive since a Member who did not fulfill his or her promises might not get readopted at the next election. The second incentive is the desire to improve relations with activists to ensure a sound local party organization. Since activist preferences about constituency work can matter in both these senses (particularly if automatic reselection is implemented), then the next question is whether the expectations of party activists and loyalists differ very much from other groups in the electorate. Do they, for example, have different expectations about the Member's proper role? What do they tend to mention positively and negatively about their M.P.s and do they focus on different aspects than do other individuals in the electorate? Do they avail themselves of the Member's services as frequently as do others? To answer these questions, we turn to a study of the British electorate in collaboration with Gallup Poll shortly after the May 1979 election.² In this study, voters were asked a set of questions about their incumbent Member and his or her constituency services. Many of these questions paralleled those used in the 1978 CPS U.S. Congressional election study.

One of the questions in this study asked the respondent to say which of the following activities was the most important aspect of the M.P.'s job: helping people, protecting the interests of the constituency, bureaucratic oversight, keeping in touch, or debating and voting. In Table I, the responses are crosstabulated with whether the respondent was, 1) a party activist in the same party as the incumbent, 2) a strong party identifier in the same party as the incumbent, 3) a weak party identifier in the same party as the incumbent, 4) an identifier in the party opposite from the incumbent and 5) a non-party identifier. Table I allows us to compare the expectations of activists and loyalists inside the incumbent's party with other groups in the electorate. In addition, it breaks the responses down further by Conservative and Labour party so that we can check for party differences.

Table I indicates that expectations about the Member's proper role are surprisingly similar across all groups. The three most important activities are protecting the interests of the constituency, helping people, and keeping in touch, and the two least important activities are debating and voting and bureaucratic oversight. Activists and strong party identifiers were not more likely to emphasize the debating and voting function, as one might have plausibly hypothesized, but they were somewhat less likely to mention keeping in touch as important. Considering party differences at all levels, Conservatives were somewhat more likely than Labour to mention protecting the interests of their constituency as important and somewhat less likely to mention keeping in touch and helping people.

TABLE I
EXPECTED ROLE OF THE MEMBER

		Helping People	Protecting the Interests of the Constituency	Bureaucratic Oversight	Keeping in Touch	Debating and Voting	(N)
Party Activist in same party as Incumbent	ALL	25	50	6	13	6	(16)
Strong Party Identifiers of Same Party as Inc.	ALL	21	30	5	30	14	(293)
	CON	17	34	6	25	18	
	LAB	24	27	4	37	9	
Weak Party Identifier of Same Party as Inc.	ALL	28	30	4	25	13	(319)
	CON	24	32	4	25	15	
	LAB	33	25	4	25	13	
Identifies with Opposite Party	ALL	21	30	6	30	14	(497)
	CON	20	34	7	21	18	
	LAB	22	27	5	35	12	
Does not Identify with Party		21	30	6	31	11	(280)

Source: CFF-Gallup May 1979 Election Study

In general, however, the first observation is that the pattern of expectations about the Member's proper role does not seem to vary much inside or outside the incumbent's party.

A second piece of information on this issue comes from the open-ended likes and dislikes questions. Respondents were asked to say what they liked or did not like about the incumbent Member. Positive references fell into three categories: the personal qualities of the Member, his or her availability and the amount of attention the Member devoted to constituency matters. No other responses were sufficient to warrant a separate category. As is evident from Table II, those who belonged to the incumbent Member's party tended to emphasize personal qualities and availability while nonparty identifiers tended to emphasize attention to local affairs somewhat more. There is also some small difference across parties in the sense that Conservatives seem to place a greater emphasis on personal qualities than do Labourites. This is consistent with the testimony of various Conservative M.P.s who told us that personal appearance and the attractiveness of one's family often mattered to their party members.

The somewhat more interesting analysis from our point of view is of the negative references to the incumbent. These fell into four categories: policy objections, not being sufficiently active or interested in local affairs, nonavailability, and personal qualities. Responses from party activists were far too sparse for analysis. In general, policy disagreements with the incumbent were most frequent among weak party identifiers. Of the strong party identifiers, it is

TABLE II

WHAT CONSTITUENTS LIKE AND DO NOT LIKE ABOUT THEIR MEMBER

I. Positive References to Incumbent

		Personal Qualities	Availability	Paid Attention to Local Affairs	N
Party Activist in same party as Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	50	33	17	(12)
Strong Party Identifier of Same Party as Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	43 57 33	40 29 47	17 14 20	(105)
Weak Party Identifier of Same Party as Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	35 44 29	37 39 38	28 17 32	(81)
Identifies with opposite party from Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	45 46 45	33 26 39	22 29 16	(73)
Does not identify with party		31	29	40	(48)

II. Negative References to Incumbent

		Policy Objections	Not sufficiently active or interested in local affairs	Non- availability	Personal Qualities	N
Party Activist in same party as Incumbent			Too Few Observations			(2)
Strong Party Identifier of Same Party as Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	26 0 25	9 0 12	61 100 47	4 0 6	(23)
Weak Party Identifier of Same Party as Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	32 33 31	18 22 15	36 33 39	14 11 15	(22)
Identifies with opposite party from Incumbent	ALL CON LAB	29 39 22	12 12 13	46 34 54	12 15 11	(104)
Does not identify with party		17	22	48	13	(23)

Source: CFF - Gallup May 1979 Election Study

interesting to notice that policy objections were mentioned by Labour but not by Conservative partisans. One explanation for this may be that since Labour had been in government for the preceding period, Labour Members had been identified with the Callaghan government's unpopular and controversial measures. In opposition, policy disagreements may be less salient.

The important thing to observe, however, is that the most frequent complaint for all groups is the nonavailability of the Member. This is consistent with our previous findings that Members themselves think that getting back to the constituency often and keeping in touch is so important [Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1980]. Contrary to what one might presuppose, nonavailability rather than policy disagreement is the most common transgression of the M.P. in the eyes of his or her constituents.

In both the expectations about the Member's proper role and the expressed positive and negative references about incumbent Members, we have seen no evidence that activists and loyalists place any less emphasis on the constituency work of the Member than do others in the electorate. Another indication of this is that party activists and strong identifiers are even more likely than others to make use of the Member's services. In our Gallup study, respondents were asked whether they had ever contacted the Member for help or for information. As one can readily see from Table III, the probability of making use of the Member's constituency services increases with strength of identification and with party activism. Members do help individuals who identify with the opposite party or with no party, but

TABLE III
CITIZEN-INITIATED CONTACT WITH INCUMBENT

	Did Not Contact Incumbent M.P.			Contacted the Incumbent M.P.			<u>N</u>
	<u>ALL</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>ALL</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	
Party Activist in same party as Incumbent	45	46	50	55	54	50	(20)
Strong Party Identifier of Same Party as Inc	87	86	89	13	14	11	(330)
Weak Party Identifier of Same Party as Inc	93	92	93	7	8	7	(379)
Identifier With Opposite Party	92	92	93	8	8	7	(580)
Does Not Identify with Party	96	-	-	4	-	-	(343)

Source: CFF-Gallup May 1979 Election Study

the probability of contact is clearly higher within party ranks rather than without. This is true for both parties.

It is also the case that activists and strong party identifiers are more likely to recall specific things that the M.P. has done for the constituency than are other individuals in the electorate. The Gallup study asked respondents whether they could recall anything in particular that the Member had done for the constituency. As with incumbent contacts, the probability of recalling the Member's district services increases with party activism and strength of identification. Nonparty identifiers, by contrast, are the least likely to recall anything that the incumbent had done for the constituency. Once again, this relationship holds for both parties.

The evidence then, is that constituency service is at least as salient to the party activist and strong party identifier as it is to other groups in the electorate. Indeed, in terms of the probability of having made use of the incumbent's constituency services, or of recalling the incumbent's achievements, constituency work may even be more important to activists and loyalists than to others. What effect then would a policy like automatic reselection have on Member behavior? While reselection would undoubtedly strengthen the hands of activists who wish to control the policy positions of their M.P.s, it would also increase the incentive for Members to attend more diligently to their constituency affairs. In previous studies, we have shown both that constituency work is perceived to have electoral benefit and that the evaluations which British voters form of their

TABLE IV

SERVICES OF THE MEMBER

	Does Not Recall Constituency Service			Recalls Constituency Service			<u>N</u>
	<u>ALL</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>ALL</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	
Party Activist in same party as Incumbent		77	67	40	23	33	(20)
Strong Party Identifier of Same Party as Inc	80	82	79	20	18	21	(336)
Weak Party Identifier of Same Party as Inc	87	89	85	13	11	15	(385)
Identifier With Opposite Party	90	89	90	10	11	10	(587)
Does Not Identify with Party	89	-	-	11	-	-	(257)

Source: CFF-Gallup May 1979 Election Study

M.P.s are shaped by constituency contacts of various sorts [Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1979]. In addition to the electoral incentive, there is in Great Britain a party incentive to constituency work: the expected reward in terms of higher local party morale, more funds and better relations with activists. Reselection would strengthen the party incentive and contribute to the trend of closer involvement in constituent and constituency affairs by Members. To put it another way, the more enduring effect of such a reform may be an increasingly parochial perspective rather than policy extremism.

CONSTITUENCY WORK AND NATIONAL PARTY TIES

Local electoral and party pressures may be drawing Members into closer involvement with their constituencies, but does constituency work at the same time weaken the electoral ties between M.P.s and their national parties? Certainly, the intent of MPs who do a great deal of constituency work is to create a buffer between themselves and adverse national swings by weakening the connection in the voter's minds between the individual Member and his or her national party. Stokes' research on the strength of the national swing in Great Britain has made many scholars skeptical about the electoral value of such a strategy [Stokes, 1967], and yet, some Members believe that they have built up a general following over the years by virtue of their constituency work.

One clue that perhaps constituency work does indeed pay off is suggested by an observation that Ivor Crewe made in his analysis of the May 1979 General Election in the Times Guide to the House of

Commons. Discussing various anomalies in the national swing, Crewe observed that "Labour kept the swing down in its own marginals." Said he, "A uniform 5.2 percent national swing would have transferred 64 seats from Labour to the Conservatives: the actual number changing hands was only 55 because although Labour lost 12 seats vulnerable to a swing of over 5.3 percent, it saved as many as 21 seats vulnerable to a swing below." [Crewe, 1979, p. 250] Curtice and Steed, comparing the swings of seats with new incumbents to those without in 1974, conclude that there is strong circumstantial evidence of a personal vote which could explain this phenomenon. They estimate that such a following could account for approximately 1500 votes in an average size constituency. [Curtice and Steed, 1980, p. 409] In earlier work, we have shown that Members in marginal seats are quantitatively and qualitatively more aggressive in their approach to constituency work: they hold more surgeries, they visit their constituency more often, they solicit casework from their constituents, they refer fewer cases and they publicize their constituency work more frequently [Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1980]. The point is that M.P.s in marginal seats do more because their position is less secure.

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that M.P.s in marginal seats have more favorable images among voters than do other M.P.s. This can be measured in any number of ways. In our Gallup study, for instance, voters were asked to rate the job that their Member of Parliament had done -- whether it was very good, good, fair, poor or very poor. As Table V shows, those in marginal seats tended

TABLE V
MEMBER'S IMAGES BY MARGINALITY

	0-5 (430)	6-9 (307)	10-15 (334)	16-20 (361)	21-29 (328)	30+ (195)
<u>Member's Job Ratings</u>						
Very good	19	10	15	5	8	11
Good	28	23	26	18	17	26
Fair	19	26	21	25	24	18
Poor	5	5	8	11	4	8
Very poor	2	1	2	3	5	4
DK	28	35	29	38	41	33
<u>MP Dislikes</u>						
Yes	14	9	19	23	12	7
No	75	70	65	62	62	80
DK	10	20	18	15	26	14
<u>MP Likes</u>						
Yes	38	25	27	17	18	19
No	50	49	52	67	52	58
DK	12	25	21	17	30	23
<u>Expectation of Helpfulness</u>						
Very helpful	37	28	31	21	27	25
Somewhat helpful	26	32	26	29	26	26
Not very helpful	10	9	11	20	12	6
Depends	5	10	6	11	11	13
DK	21	21	26	20	24	30

to give their representatives slightly higher ratings than those in safe seats. In particular, those in the most marginal category (i.e. 0-5 percent) gave their Members the highest percentage of very good and good ratings. This category also had the lowest percentage of don't knows, which tells us something about the higher salience of Members in marginal seats. Another indicator of incumbent approval is the likes and dislikes question discussed earlier. Looking at Table V, we see that the highest percentage of positive references to the incumbent was in the 0-5 percent category of marginality. On the other hand, the same pattern does not hold for negative references, which would indicate that, on balance, Members in marginal seats seem to have more positive images. Lastly, one more indicator that the greater effort of Members in marginal seats may have some effect is the set of responses to the question "If you had a problem that your M.P. _____ could do something about, do you think that he/she would be very helpful, somewhat helpful or not very helpful to you?" In all categories of marginality, Members fare pretty well, but the expectations of incumbent helpfulness are higher in the more marginal seats. This is that we would expect in the light of the finding that Members in marginal seats undertake more surgeries, solicit cases, have a higher propensity to advertise, and the rest.

In another sense, however, the finding that Members in marginal seats have higher job evaluations and more favourable images is both surprising and notable. Conventional wisdom would lead us to expect that because of the strength of the party label in Great Britain, incumbent Members in safe seats (i.e. where the incumbent's

party has a large electoral advantage) should be evaluated more highly than those in unsafe seats: in other words, the more partisan the seat, the more favourable the Member's evaluation should be. What these data indicate is that preponderance of party strength in a constituency does not account for the level of the incumbent's evaluations. In fact, British incumbent Members tend to be more popular when their partisan advantage is less.

Thus, it can be shown that M.P.s in marginal seats undertake higher levels of constituency service, and that they enjoy a greater amount of popularity among voters and a more favorable constituency image. Is there any evidence that the anomaly Crewe discusses can be traced to constituency work? Specifically, can it be shown that those who pursued a diligent constituency work strategy had better swings in 1979 than those who did not? To test this hypothesis, we rely on our sample of Members and agents, and in particular on incumbent Members who ran in both October 1974 and May 1979. The reason for this is that we do not want to examine seats which involve new or retired Members since the hypothesis about constituency service requires continuity in the incumbent's tenure of office. The dependent variable is the swing ratio as reported in the election results of the Times Guide to the House of Commons 1979. Since regional deviations mattered in 1979, we must control for the swing in the region the incumbent was running in. In addition, there is some evidence that constituencies with substantial immigrant communities resisted the swing towards the Conservatives and also that there were differences between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. These variables were

included in the model.³ A variety of other variables were also tried in earlier specifications, including whether the Liberal candidate withdrew from the race, and whether the Member was a Government minister or opposition leader. The coefficients were not significant in these instances and they were accordingly left out of the final model.

The key variable from the point of view of testing the hypothesis at hand is the measure of constituency service. Here we relied on our earlier studies which found that the four best indicators of what we termed an entrepreneurial constituency style were the frequency of surgeries, whether the Member handled local cases, whether the Member publicized his or her casework activities, and whether the Member solicited cases. These activities were shown to be significantly related to party, year of election and the marginality of the Member's seat [Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1980].

The true model is that Members who adopt an aggressive constituency strategy undertake more constituency activities, and that the cumulative effect of these activities is higher name recognition and a better constituency reputation. This in turn produces votes. What we observe is not the true strategy S but activity indicators of that strategy $a_1 \dots a_n$. This is a latent variable model [Hanushek and Jackson, 1977, Chapter 10]. Leaving aside more complex methodologies for dealing with this problem, we will settle for present purposes on a simple approach. It is to create an additive index with equal weighting for each activity: the individual activities are expressed as dummy variables and added together. The more activities an

individual undertakes, the more aggressive the entrepreneurial strategy or effort is presumed to be. In summary, the model is

$$Y = \alpha + B_1 \text{ Rswing} + B_2 \text{ Index} \\ + B_3 \text{ Imm.} + B_4 \text{ Met} + B_5 \text{ Non Met} + u$$

where: Y is the swing for the incumbent in 1979

Rswing is the regional swing in the incumbents region

Index is the index of entrepreneurial activities

Imm. is the percent immigrant in the constituency

Met is a dummy indicating whether the constituency is a metropolitan city

Non Met is a dummy indicating whether the constituency is a non-metropolitan city.

Since the swing is the measure of the average Conservative gain and Labour loss, high values indicate a better swing for the Conservatives and lower values indicate a better swing for Labour. This should be remembered when interpreting the coefficients in the equations. Also, the samples are stratified into Conservative and Labour equations both for the reason just mentioned and to see whether the impact of casework on the swing applies equally to Conservative and Labour marginals.

Table VI shows the results of the estimations with all the control variables included and then a reduced equation with the insignificant variables removed. In both the Conservative and Labour equations, the index of entrepreneurial activities variable has a statistically significant coefficient in the predicted direction.

TABLE VI
EFFECT OF CONSTITUENCY WORK ON SWING

	Conservative Swing in 1979		Labour Swing in 1979	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Regional Swing	.59** (.16)	.56** (.16)	.83** (.20)	.79** (.19)
Index	.42* (.19)	.44* (.19)	-.74 ⁺ (.42)	-.88* (.37)
% Immigrant	-4.24** (1.25)	-4.03** (1.10)	-1.17 (.95)	-
Metropolitan Area	.19 (.58)	-	2.23* (.97)	1.92* (.90)
Non-Metropolitan City	-.89 (.79)	-	.17 (2.05)	-
Constant	1.15	1.22	2.45	3.06
R ²	.41	.39	.55	.52
n	55	55	33	33

Procedure: OLS

Standard Errors in Parentheses and Unstandardized Coefficients Above

** p < .01

* p < .05

+ p < .10

Source: CFF Study of Member's Activities 1979
Times Guide to the House of Commons

Looking at the Labour equation, this means that higher constituency activity led to smaller swings against Labour incumbents in 1979. The size of the coefficient is quite large: for each activity in the simple linear index, the swing moved one point in the Labour, or negative, direction. Conversely, the sign of the index variable coefficient is positive in the Conservative equation, indicating that activities undertaken by Conservative Members amplified the swing in their direction. The size of the estimated coefficient in the Conservative equation is approximately half the size of that in the Labour equation, which implies that the "cushioning" effect against the prevailing Conservative swing may have been stronger in May 1979 than the "amplifying" affect in the direction of the Conservative swing.

Not surprisingly, region proves to be significantly related (at the .01 level) in both the Conservative and Labour equations. The percent immigrant also matters, but in the Conservative equation only. This finding is consistent with an observation Ivor Crewe made in his Times Guide commentary when he noted that there were exceptions to the generalization that immigrants lowered the swing to the Conservatives and cited the examples of the three Hackney and three Islington constituencies. All six were Labour seats. In short, it appears that immigrants suppressed the Conservative swing in Conservative seats primarily. Lastly, the controls for the metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities were insignificant in the Conservative equation, and only the metropolitan control was significant in the Labour equation.

The importance of constituency work in the estimated model is illustrated by the simulated swing scores in Table VII. This exercise shows the estimated swings that Conservative and Labour incumbents achieved in different regions at different levels of constituency involvement, holding constant other controls in the model and using the coefficients in equations 2 and 4. The measure of constituency involvement is the simple linear index of constituency activities which ranges in value between 1 and 5. For Labour incumbents, higher constituency involvement (measured as a higher index score) should lead to lower swing values. This is what Table VII shows. A Labour incumbent running in London, which had an average 6.4 swing to the Conservatives, could have had a swing ranging from 7.2 to 3.7 depending on his or her constituency involvement. A Labour constituency entrepreneur would beat the regional swing by one point: a Labour M.P. who neglected his or her constituency would have a swing which was 3.5 points higher than the London average. The penalty for constituency neglect in the May 1979 election was apparently quite high. This same pattern holds in regions where Labour on the whole did better. In the Northern area, for instance, the estimated swings vary between 5.3 for the neglectful M.P. to 1.7 for the M.P. who was active in the constituency.

The pattern is of course reversed for the Conservative incumbents. Constituency work "cushioned" the national swing for the Conservative Member. Using London as an example again, the inactive Conservative incumbent could have expected a swing of 5.2 while the highly active Conservative incumbent could have expected a swing of

TABLE VII

ESTIMATED SWING SCORES BY REGION AND ACTIVITY LEVEL

	Level of Constituency Involvement					
	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5	
London	1.4	0.3	5.5	4.6	3.7	Labour Swing
	5.2	5.7	6.1	6.6	7.0	Conservative Swing
South East	6.9	6.0	5.2	4.3	3.4	Labour Swing
	5.0	5.4	5.9	6.3	6.8	Conservative Swing
South and Wessex	7.6	6.7	5.8	5.0	4.1	Labour Swing
	5.5	5.9	6.4	6.8	7.3	Conservative Swing
South Western	6.9	6.0	5.2	4.3	3.4	Labour Swing
	5.1	5.5	6.0	6.4	6.9	Conservative Swing
Eastern	7.5	6.7	5.8	4.9	4.0	Labour Swing
	5.5	5.9	6.3	6.8	7.2	Conservative Swing
East Midlands	6.8	6.0	5.0	4.2	3.3	Labour Swing
	4.9	6.4	5.8	6.3	6.7	Conservative Swing
Midlands	7.5	6.6	5.7	4.8	3.9	Labour Swing
	5.4	5.8	6.3	6.7	7.2	Conservative Swing
North West	5.6	4.8	3.9	3.0	2.1	Labour Swing
	4.1	4.6	5.0	5.4	5.9	Conservative Swing
Yorkshire	5.6	4.7	3.8	2.9	2.0	Labour Swing
	4.0	4.5	4.9	5.4	5.8	Conservative Swing
Northern	5.3	4.4	3.5	2.6	1.7	Labour Swing
	3.8	4.3	4.7	5.2	5.6	Conservative Swing
Scotland	1.6	.7	-.1	-1.0	-1.9	Labour Swing
	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.6	3.0	Conservative Swing
Wales	6.4	5.6	4.7	3.8	2.9	Labour Swing
	4.7	5.1	5.6	6.0	6.4	Conservative Swing

7.0. Notice that the range for the Conservative incumbents is about half the size of that for the Labour incumbents. Similarly, in the Northern area, the range for the Conservative incumbent is between 3.8 and 5.6, which is less than the range for the Labour incumbents. Though the "amplifying" effect is somewhat lower than the "cushioning" effect, it still matters. The inactive Conservative incumbent in the North does slightly worse than the regional average of 3.9, whereas the active Conservative incumbent adds a point and one half to the regional swing.

There are two additional points which should be raised about these estimations. First, the regional swing variables are important to the specification. Leaving them out causes the relationship between constituency activity and the dependent variable to weaken considerably. In effect, what the equation predicts are deviations of an individual Member's swing from the regional swing, or to put it another way, whether the Member beat the regional swing. As we have noted elsewhere, beating the regional swing might not be sufficient to ensure reelection and may, therefore, be small consolation to a hard working M.P. who was knocked out of office by the national government's unpopularity, but it does show that Members can have some influence over their electoral fate. It also suggests that with a more moderate national swing, many of the hard working defeated Labour M.P.s could have saved their seats. A second observation is that there was no statistical relationship between the size and direction of the swing in individual constituencies in 1974 and 1979. In this sense, the swing measure seems to capture very nicely short term

forces which are uncorrelated over time.

Returning to the question of why Labour ran well in the marginals, what do we know? First, we know that high levels of constituency activity are related to a strong electoral incentive, and secondly that constituency work can contribute to better individual swings. The argument, therefore, is that Labour ran well in the marginals because Members in these seats paid more attention to their constituencies and were demonstrably more popular. But for their efforts, Labour losses in 1979 could have been even more disastrous.

CONCLUSIONS

The implication of this study is that there may be a growing "parochial" pull in British politics caused by the electorate's expectation (shared also by party activists and loyalists) that the M.P.s must know their constituencies well and undertake a high level of constituency service. Members who pursue this course can earn for themselves some measure of security against adverse national tides. The sufficiency of this buffer will depend on the size of the national swing and the marginality of the seat.

What conditions will strengthen or weaken this "parochial" trend? Several possibilities come to mind. First, as suggested earlier, policies which strengthen the hand of the local party will strengthen "parochialism." Reselection would enable local parties to enforce a greater commitment to constituency work by making it easier to oust Members who are aloof from their constituencies. Evidence from Members themselves about what adoption committees ask and seem to

be looking for suggests that a feeling for the constituency and its problems is very important. Survey evidence in this paper has further shown that constituency work is considered important by party activists and identifiers. In this sense, the electoral incentive of winning votes and the party incentive converge in a way that the policy preferences of the two groups do not: nonidentifiers, weak major party identifiers and minor party identifiers do not share the policy preferences of major party activists and strong party identifiers, but diligent constituency work, it would seem, pleases all constituencies. This convergence of nonpolicy preferences could prove to be a very strong incentive.

A second condition which would strengthen the "parochialization" of British politics would be the continued unpopularity of the two major parties and their policies. If the British economy continues to decline despite or because of monetarism, or if racial tensions worsen, or if the Northern Irish problem festers, the level of frustration and alienation among voters will increase. The need for the politician to secure a reliable base of support or to disassociate himself or herself from deteriorating conditions will also increase and efforts at the local level might rise accordingly. Local strategy may, therefore, be inversely related to the health of the national parties. This is not to say of course that British candidates will ever be able to separate themselves from national trends to the degree that American Congressional candidates can, but it is to say that within the context of British political institutions and political experience, we may witness a movement in a

more "parochial" direction as the dominant two party class cleavage ages.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Gallup study samples 133 districts. During 1978 and 1979, we interviewed 146 MPs and agents, including some MPs and agents in the same constituencies and a few in constituencies not sampled by Gallup. Duplicate interviews and those outside the 1979 framework are excluded in this study.
2. The voter study consists of questions paralleling those asked in the 1978 Congressional election study. These questions were included in the Gallup Polls regular post-election survey so that the file includes questions about the respondent's vote, various sociodemographic characteristics as well as those about the sitting Member. The voter study consists of 2031 observations. In the case of seats which had new Members running in May 1979, the questions refer to the previous sitting Member.
3. Crewe also mentions that there were large swings in affluent working class areas, but there were not enough cases of New Towns and "car worker seats" to test this hypothesis adequately.

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